

CVW-1 TRAINS WITH MULTINATIONAL PARTNERS

While deployed aboard *Enterprise* (CVN 65) in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, a detachment from Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1 left combat operations to take part in an air exercise with the Royal Bahraini Air Force (RBAF) and the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF). The 2007 Nautical Artist Exercise took place in the skies over Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain, during the last week of October 2007 and included aircraft from the VFA-86 Sidewinders, the VFA-211 Checkmates, the VMFA-251 Thunderbolts, the VFA-136 Knighthawks, and the VS-32 Maulers.

Bahraini aircraft operating out of Shaikh Isa included F-16 Fighting Falcons, F-5 Tigers, BAE Hawks, and other training aircraft. Each day the airspace above Shaikh Isa Air Base was alive with activity as both F/A-18Cs and F/A-18Fs fought 1v1 against the Bahraini Block 40 F-16s. CVW-1 aircrews also executed dissimilar air combat training, flying 2v2 with the Bahrainis over the southern Arabian Gulf. These exercises gave each country an opportunity to hone their skills in blue air and red air roles.

While the focus of Royal Bahraini Air Force events was small in scale, the Royal Saudi Air Force provided an opportunity for



Above, U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain, J. Adam Ereli, poses with American and Bahraini pilots at Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain. Left, an S-3B Viking and F/A-18 Hornets prepare for launch as the sun rises over Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain, during the 2007 Nautical Artist Exercise.



large force training. Initially, CVW-1 aircraft flew both 2v2 and 4v4 against Saudi F-15C Eagles and F-15S Strike Eagles. As with the Bahraini flights, both countries had an opportunity to fly blue and red air roles. However, the evolutions with the RSAF focused on defensive counter air and offensive counter air operations. As the week progressed, RSAF flights evolved into more advanced large force exercises that included Saudi IDS Tornados. The Tornados struck targets in the low altitude environment while the counter air missions operated concurrently above them. Most events totaled at least 16 aircraft. The Saudi large force exercises gave both nations an opportunity to plan and execute complex air-to-air and air-to-ground missions in a multinational environment.

The 2007 Nautical Artist Exercise was a great opportunity to work with the Royal Bahraini Air Force and the Royal Saudi Air Force. Personnel involved in the detachment came away with a profound mutual respect for each country's professionalism and abilities. Detachment personnel spent the week quartered with their Bahraini counterparts, which offered an opportunity for professional exchanges among both the pilots and maintenance crews. The 2007 Nautical Artist Exercise also enhanced our strong military relationships with these two countries and was deemed a success by the commanders of the Royal Bahraini Air Force, Royal Saudi Air Force, and the commander of Carrier Air Wing 1. ✈

Lt. Cleveland and Lt. Woodward are pilots with VFA-86.